

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 ACDA-07 AID-05 DHA-02 ORM-02 IO-13 TRSE-00  
MCT-01 /087 W

-----117595 051857Z /45

R 051201Z AUG 77

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0341

INFO AMEMBASSY DARESSALAAM

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF, MOPS, BC RH

SUBJECT: RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES AMBUSH GROUP HEADED FOR BOTSWANA

REF: (A) GABORONE 1698, (B) GABORONE 1736

1. BULAWAYO CHRONICLE RAN FRONT-PAGE ARTICLE AUGUST 2 DESCRIBING RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES AMBUSH OF PARTY OF 140 RHODESIANS REPORTEDLY ENROUTE TO BOTSWANA BORDER. TEN MEMBERS (FOUR OF THEM WOMEN) OF PARTY WERE KILLED AND FIVE WERE WOUNDED. FIFTEEN (INCLUDING ONE WOMAN) WERE CAPTURED AND JAILED AT PLUMTREE POLICE COMPOUND LESS THAN TEN MILES FROM BOTSWANA BORDER. CHRONICLE ARTICLE STATES THAT PARTY LEFT BULAWAYO AREA JULY 29 AND THAT RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES CAUGHT UP AND OPENED FIRE AT APPROXIMATELY 5:00 P.M., JULY 31. AMBUSH, WHICH WAS CARRIED OUT BY BOTH GROUND TROOPS AND "POLICE AIR WING", REPORTEDLY TOOK PLACE TEN KILOMETERS NORTH OF PLUMTREE. IN THE INITIAL AMBUSH, CASULTIES AMONG THE MEMBERS OF THE GROUP WERE SIX DEAD, FOUR

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WOUNDED AND FIFTEEN CAPTURED.

2. ACCORDING TO CHRONICLE ARTICLE, RHODESIAN FORCES THEN CONDUCTED FOLLOW-UP OPERATION "NEAR THE BORDER" IN WHICH FOUR MORE MEMBERS OF THE GROUP WERE KILLED. SECURITY FORCES SUFFERED NO CASULTIES PROBABLY BECAUSE, ACCORDING TO CHRONICLE ACCOUNT, ONLY THREE MEMBERS OF PARTY

WERE ARMED. SPOKESMAN STATED THAT SECURITY FORCES WERE "HOT ON TRAIL OF TWO OF THE TERRORISTS AND WE HOPE TO GET THEM". ARTICLE WENT ON TO GIVE ACCOUNTS BY PURPORTED MEMBERS OF THE GROUP WHO CLAIMED TO HAVE BEEN RECRUITED BY GUERRILLAS IN BULAWAYO AREA. RECRUITERS REPORTEDLY SHOWED YOUNG MEN GRENADES, ASKED WHETHER THEY WANTED TO LEARN ABOUT TERRORISM, AND IMPLICITLY THREATENED THEM IF THEY REFUSED TO JOIN GROUP HEADED FOR BOTSWANA.

3. COMMENT: CHRONICLE ARTICLE WOULD SEEM TO BEAR OUT THAT EFFORTS OF RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES TO PREVENT RECRUITS OR REFUGEES FROM CROSSING BOTSWANA BORDER HAVE INCREASED AND MAY PARTIALLY EXPLAIN RECENT DECREASES OF RATE OF REFUGEE FLOW INTO BOTSWANA. MOREOVER, INCIDENTS OF THIS TYPE UNDOUBTEDLY FUEL CONCERN BY GOB OFFICIALS THAT RHODESIAN HOT PURSUIT OF ESCAPING "TERRORISTS", OBVIOUSLY INCLUDING UNARMED CIVILIANS, WILL CONTINUE EVEN AFTER THEY HAVE BECOME "REFUGEES" IN BOTSWANA. WE NOTE IN PARTICULAR CONCERN EXPRESSED RECENTLY TO THE AMBASSADOR BY BDF OFFICIAL THAT RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES INTEND TO STAGE AMBUSHES ALONG "UNDERGROUND" ROUTE FROM RHODESIA TO BOTSWANA (PARA 5, REF A). WHILE THIS AMBUSH REPORTEDLY TOOK PLACE JUST INSIDE RHODESIAN TERRITORY, RHODESIAN DETERMINATION TO PREVENT ESCAPE OF "TERRORISTS" COULD WELL LEAD TO FURTHER INCURSIONS INTO BOTSWANA TERRITORY. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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## Message Attributes

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